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Media Statement

'DIABESITY' BUSTERS ON SUPERMARKET SHELVES

WA researchers working on creating new foods to tackle the growing 'diabesity' epidemic are working with local manufacturers to have lupin-based pasta and biscuits on supermarket shelves by the end of the year.

Researchers from the Centre for Food and Genomic Medicine (CFGM) based at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) are in talks with a WA-based manufacturer to make new lupin-flour pasta and biscuits available to consumers, and have a bank of new-age foods ready to be put on WA shopping lists.

Heading the lupin food product investigations at the CFGM Associate Professor Vijay Jayasena, Program Leader of the Food Science & Technology Program at Curtin University of Technology, said this was an exciting step in the commercialization process of the novel foods.

"This is a fantastic leap forward into making healthier food options available to consumers – we've already had a win with our bread, so we're looking to spread that success further into other staple foods," he said.

"There are a number of different foods that we all eat on a regular basis, like bread, pasta and snack foods, so the more lupin-based options we have out there, the more we can help people improve their health."

In August 2007, Slimmer's Choice, a lupin-based bread was released onto the market by Fremantle's Bodhi's Bakehouse after the CFGM first created the product.

"The great thing about these new foods we've created, which include noodles, muffins, biscuits and crisps, is they allow people to make a healthy change without having to change their entire dietary habits – they're eating the same foods, with the same taste, hopefully with a healthier outcome," Associate Professor Jayasena said.

"We've managed to create a huge range of really tasty food alternatives with flour made from lupin kernels – similar to soybeans, lupins are high in protein and dietary fibre, but low in fat content and low GI and our initial studies suggest that they help people feel fuller for longer and curb calorie intake.

"All of our food products have been through rigorous testing as well as the all-important taste-testing, and they've passed with flying colours – we've got some really solid, marketable products."

CFGM Director Professor Peter Leedman said the lupin-based foods were an exciting WA-made prospect that could help to alleviate a global problem.

"It's clear that we need to start looking at foods for the future that may help us steer clear of the health problems that we're facing as a result of growing obesity rates – especially if we can encourage our children to choose healthier food options," he said.

"We have a number of investigations underway into the health benefits of lupins and we're making great headway. It looks like lupin foods have global potential which would not only lend potential health benefits to the State, but fantastic economic results as well, with WA at the head of the pack."

Western Australia is the producer of ~80 per cent of the world's supply of Australian sweet lupins.

MEDIA CONTACT: Sarah Hayward, WAIMR Media Consultant, m 0411 404 415, o 9388 9280